

The Second Body and the Multiple Outside

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Patho-logical knowledge

“A body doesn’t coincide with itself” Brian Massumi

In a visual field a thing which doesn’t coincide with itself is a blurry thing whose position cannot but be approximated. This would correspond to an epistemology based on uncertainty - unlike the Western knowledge relying on truth and certainty, on identity and fixity of laws underpinning a logical system or a scientific theory. That is perhaps why blurry images bring about fear of unknown and are associated with terrorism, forensics, criminology or disabled sight thus poor logic.

A thing which doesn’t coincide with itself is a frightful micro-cosmology. Healthy thought ceaselessly introduces a succession of time or a minimum causality in order to distance the indistinguishably different points and soften up the reasoning process. Usually, in classical philosophy time has privilege over space, so that space is created in time, one cannot think the emergence of form and space without the ticking causality of time, emergence without anteriority. Blurred thinking or better said patho-logical thinking (patho-logical is collapsing the logic of sense, of pathos and an impaired, diseased logic, a counterintuitive, stubborn and humiliating logic) can only grasp the necessity of uncertainty, of a blunt identity, of emergence without anteriority.

A diseased world from which time has been severed is a suffocating breathless world of absolute instance, of infinitesimal nowness where emergence equals eternity and events don’t happen, they just are, frozen in a snapshot of overlapping actualized potentials. It is a deaf vibrancy, a non-acoustic oscillation of matter-strings, a traumatic sensorium, an inhuman regime. It is not anymore a vibrant matter(1) which folded onto a plane produces an unstable map of forces and trajectories, but a stabile instability, a map of the untraceable, the unrepresentable only a sadistic, suicidal thought could try to think. A productive paralysis similar with the “cruel thought” of Antonin Artaud. This collapse of movement and stability, this grounding of the ungroundable would be a world at the limit of thought, without process, a world of contradiction and paradox, of despair and catastrophic reason.

In mathematics, a point which doesn’t coincide with itself is a collapse of a regime of representation, the one made available and habitual by the Cartesian coordinates, where two values - the abscissa respectively the ordinate - determine uniquely a point. Taking seriously a non-Euclidean geometry (where there exist two lines that never will or can meet) and thinking intensely two different points with the same coordinates (a contradictory identity) can produce psychic unrest and nervous breakdowns. Under this regime of representation coming infinitely close to nonrepresentation, where analogy is out of place and analysis is close enough to paralysis new corrupt concepts can emerge: concepts that are dangerously closer to the unreasonable and can be rather produced than interpreted.

From this burrowed plane of emergence what we call the Second Body appeared: a

potential acquired body that could replace the first body as the body of discipline, of norm, of routinized movement, of economical habit.

The body-home and the one-world

We are inhabiting our first bodies like homes(2), we make our dwellings in the flesh the same way as we see earth as an abode(3), as familiar and protective surface that will hold no matter what. The first bodies are pleasurable, customary, they are poor actualizations of what a body can do. There is a violent history of producing this instrumental body-home, of subduing it to a strict work discipline. Taming the rebel limbs by subordinating them to a controlling mind necessitated a long process that started with the establishment of a certain scientific paradigm that became dominant from Renaissance on. Silvia Federici is discussing at length in her book "The Caliban and the Witch" the way the first capitalist machine - the body-machine was produced, beginning with the 16th and 17th centuries, as well as the role of the great witch-hunt, the enclosures of land and erosion of community(4). Along with the advent of capitalism, a uniformity of points of view was enforced and maintained - the primacy of sight and the canonization of central perspective are key aspects of the process. The world became one and the perspective unique, based on an "objective universality of bodies and substance"(5).

Unhome - a world of horrific openness or weird simplicity?

For Tom Sparrow(6) human habit is directly involved in an economy of the vital: "The body is laced with an implicit knowledge that enables our escape from brute being". Brute being is catastrophic and suicidal, it is overproductive and out of focus, destructively open because it can never learn and repeat. It is unstable matter fluctuating in and out of form. "We can locate the basis of our behavioral habits in our sensations. An affective circuit, or what James calls a habitual chain, is a series of muscular contractions that are correlated point by point with a series of sensations". Second body is about destabilizing the series, introducing the viral into the visceral algorithm to open a patho-logical thinking and an abysmal level of affect. There have already been attempts at getting out of the protective shell, of dissolving one's organs, of losing one's "human constitution". Clarice Lispector(7) was looking for "the great courage to resist the temptation to invent a form." In every moment we are about to take an intimate shape, to consolidate in a known form, to create the world around us as we know it. There is an immense "fear of being undelimited", of losing periphery, of falling through the ground. It is the fright of ungroundedness, the horror of being on the brink of the solid. To escape from form is to melt one's habits, to exhaust reserves, to give thought a liquid ground and be on the brink of extinction. "Putting one's mouth into the matter of life" or breaking "through language in order to touch life"(8) is reaching for this formless form, for the collapse of the ecstatic. The act of consolidation should be the second last before annihilation. Survival thus requires a last salutary gesture of inhibition: "Now that I have to save tomorrow, that I have to have a form because I don't sense that I have the strength to stay disorganized, now that, fatefully, I shall have to frame that monstrous, infinite flesh and cut it into pieces that something the size of my mouth can take in, and the size of my eyes' vision, now that I shall fatefully succumb to the necessity of form that comes from my fear of being undelimited—then let me at least have the courage to let that form form by itself,

like a crust that hardens on its own, a fiery nebula that cools into earth. And let me have the great courage to resist the temptation to invent a form" (Clarice Lispector).

All organisms create experimental rules to simplify their world. Habits of perception organize the environment, running an apparent compact, stable reality on and on. They make up the operating system lacing the world together, preventing the stricture of the real from loosening at every instance. Inhibition is necessary in order to function. Every fixity, every identity is an inhibition of the continuous production of natures.

Self-reflection - the cage of interiority - inhibits the becoming freezing it into too known a world sustained by an immovable ground. The second body is a post-self body facing a catastrophic openness, the nightmarish gulf of the unknown. It a body of minimum stability. For a post-self body the outside has contaminating effects, as in the case of the Amazonian Juruna. Aparecida Vilaça considers that "alterity, not identity, is the default state in Amazonia"(9). Constantly "abducting the outside" (Reza Negarestani), the alterity, the unknown "a latent possibility of alteration" is ensured. In order to become, to metamorphose one has to operate at the level of impersonal affect and alien knowledge. "Will and consciousness are subtractive"(10). Every actualization is a closure, strangling the field of the possible. As soon as something becomes present, that something subtracts itself from the potential. Every actualization is "a movement away from the future". Or in Clarice Lispector's words: "thought is obedience". If "foresight closes the world", then we need to suicidally persist in the closure of nowness, to dwell in the disfunction of two points trying to inhabit a same space. Out of this desolation something can happen. In every negativity lies the possibility of a netherworld.

A simplified world of paroxysmal habit devoid of self-reflection can be extremely intense. For example, a body of a tick produces a world of unbound pathos. Waiting in blindness even eighteen years for the striking smell a furry surface to enter its reach, the tick lets itself fall at the right moment, exactly when the hairy skin and warmth is below. It dispassionately feeds on the awaited blood, just to leave its world and die(11).

As the tick, a second body needs to practice different habits in order to hold its world together, be it even for an instance. Could it be that the faintly stabilized world of a "chronically unstable body" be a world of awesome simplicity like that of a tick? Could a new habit inhibit a horrific openness into a world of weird simplicity?

The second body - a the nameless body

In the present economy that feeds itself on life and innumerable ways of being, the price to pay is the "scarcity of the possible" and an "underdeveloped everyday life"(12). The vital coincides with the economical, consumption becomes marketing and being becomes a job. There seems to be no morphological freedom in the sense that the forms of life we embody are prefabricated. "The effects of power on us is our identity"(13). In today's society of control, power acts by circumscribing the virtual, by "confining the outside"(14) and producing flat bodies as mere screens for the projection of images. The spectacle is not only outside, we have become the spectacle.

Staying paralyzed within the same habitual chains that form our identity and mold our

bodies maintains the vital, but keeps it fix and poor: "One makes oneself someone by giving oneself form. One acquires an identity, a gender, a function, a solidity"(15). Production and acquisition are about rendering the already solidified affectable, liquidifying the solid, terrorizing the rigid. This is what contemporary capitalism has understood and has enacted with the flexibilization of work, the opening of markets, the financialization of the economy. A liquid economy is involved in mining not only the environment but the life-potential. It works closely to the vital principle and thus organizes around fear. It wants to be a capital-vitalism where commodities are ensouled and living is commodified.

The world that hardens up around us is just a collective perception of homeness. A constructed safety which oftentimes sinks into boredom, depression and exhaustion of the imagination. Fixation and attachment are embedded in the society of spectacle. To reach for another outside, this real needs to destabilize, to unhome, the body needs to find a new human, to unself. We need to work with our presence, with unknown kinds of presence, "to lose our third leg" - the one that we were not aware of having. Become disorganized matter, blobs of chaos, slime molds. To unvertebrate ourselves and give the vestibular over to vertigo, become mollusks. To grow "thousands of cilia blinking", to become "protozoic, pure protein"(7). Or let the completely unimaginable take over.

While the first body is a body of norm whose schema follows the most common habitual geometry, the second body is the body of cataclysmic gesture, of traumatic posture which bends the reason and is riding on affect. It is not a contorsionate body which exceeds its honest representation like in mannerism or even more (but actually less interesting) in baroque. It is a postyoga inhuman body, unrecognizable in its perverted ontology. It is the ever postponed inhibition of the brutality of being, the regime of the mold, amorphous excess.

Our body posture, our habits and the available micro-movements determine certain concepts, a gestural rationality at the basis of politics, of the organization of society. We need traumatic concepts and a humiliating logic to activate a different kind of affective reasoning that could produce another body. What can be produced is neither a new subject nor an object, but the conditions for new possibility of being a body. There are two ways: to posit a new concept (i. e. the second body) which will then capacitate this unknown body to form or vice versa, to render the available body unknown and see what new concepts this act produces. Working with the unknown means there is no need to try to know what is to be human, but to axiomatically enter the inhuman, posit being before knowing. There is no need of knowing the home for we are never at home.

The gesture of trying to know - to know obliquely and not in the sense of classical perpendicular knowledge - what a second body is, or better said first to produce it and then to know it, is a horrific mathematical gesture, or in Lovecraft's terms a "monstrous perversion of geometrical laws"(16).

We don't know what a second body is, but as long as unthought is productive and affect is real, there is work to do with the unknown part of the concept. Second Body is a concept that produces presence and vice versa. Like Lovecraft's "nameless thing" the second body

cannot be uttered and represented, we can never understand it by means of reason and consciousness what this second body is. We can just speculatively posit it, force its emergence, work with it axiomatically. This methodology is not about finding the truth, the true body or its essence, but about unfolding a manipulative thought which is above all productive. We can produce this nameless second body, abduct it from the outside - an outside both in the sense of potential and of exteriority, unknown, unthought.

The multiple outside and the second space

Two points that occupy the same space can throw our references into crisis and activate a traumatic reason, a patho-logical knowledge. But is it the same space that the two points occupy or could each point generate its own space, which we see as one just because we are frozen in a logic that conceives of the real as unique? The trauma of the two points suffocating the same space generates a need to rebel against the homeness of the earth, against the stability of the real, the fixity of axes determining a space. It produces a bending of thought, a vulnerable reasoning that is able to grasp an affectable physics, with no stable laws underpinning a logical reality - a patho-logical production of different realities under a multitude of perspectives.

It would thus seem that both for the first body - a normative, human body and the second body - an unknown, inhuman body there is the same world to inhabit, one space to occupy. Again we deal with a suffocating unprinciple, with a weird abstract in which reduction is asymmetrical, the space is reduced to one and the bodies inhabiting the same amount of space remain multiple, unreduced. Nevertheless, this trauma is not enough.

Classical Western knowledge has conceived of the real as unique. It is part of our ontological regime that there is only one single space determined by identical laws that can comprehend points or units and only one reality producing bodies identical in their nature. European anthropology has been preoccupied with describing the native's point of view on reality. Following a multiculturalist approach, there is only one reality and different takes on the real, informed by the corresponding cultures. This is precisely what Viveiros de Castro has turned upside down with his work on the Amazonian societies. While the Europeans have attached to a totalitarian Western worldview a multiculturalism to be distantly studied and surveyed, the ontological multinaturalism of the Amazonian Indians is the closer to "theories of the possible worlds", "outside the infernal dichotomies of modernity"(5).

For the Indians there is a homogeneity of viewing thus representing the world, what changes is the world itself once being viewed or better said, sensed. This is the catastrophic worldsensing of the indigenous: not only we have two points that occupy the same space, but we have two points that generate two respective spaces, just that the spaces seem indistinguishable because we are caught into our single perspective. Perspective is nevertheless unstable, as unstable as bodies are. The catastrophe is the liquid ground such a thought floats upon - it is an ungrounded onto-epistemology because perspective can drift away, the same as bodies can transsubstantiate and generate a different reality. The real becomes a metamorphic sensitive fabric, as bodies become volatile and the unknown is always lurking around the familiar.

Of course this kind of reasoning has contaminating effects on the relation to the discipline of anthropology itself. Viveiros de Castro's indigenous alter-anthropology is "anthropology as antropophagy". As in the 16th century Tupinamba bellico-sociological cannibalism as well as in the Araweté funerary cannibalism the crucial question is: "What is it that is eaten?" Because it is neither the objectified body nor the subject of the enemy that is being eaten, but the enemy's point of view. In the same way, the new anthropology of Viveiros de Castro is cannibalizing the native's point of view, it's a contagious encounter with a different ontological and epistemological regime, not a distant scientific activity which just records alterity for the Western collection of knowledge.

Interestingly, Indian thought overlaps with Schrödinger's theory of the worlds produced by experiment. This is an example of how thought experiment can unfold the unreasonable or what Western knowledge relegated to the obscure and irrational - as were considered the indigenous ontologies. By studying nanoparticles Schrödinger's experiments show that reality (in the sense of the actual) appears after measurement. Nature is a product of intervention, it is not pre-given, but a process under construction. Not only we cannot know without interfering with what we are observing, but we constantly produce worlds. This is yet another instance of how "the notion of truth becomes affectable" (17). Knowledge (even scientific one) cannot be a mere event of revelation but a chain of events in which the unknown is posited before the known and becomes the primary productive force, unfolding a truth that is not transcendental but a further node in a network of invention. Of course, problematic remains the question of authority, which is too easily given to anything coming under the notion of science, while the alter-thinking of the Indians is ignored as dangerously obscure. However, if agency lies at the limits of the inhuman, it can be equally in the shadow-souls of the Amazonians as in the yet unknown outsides to be scientifically produced.

Following Amazonian perspectivism and the multiple reality of nanoparticles, a different body pertains to another configuration of the known, at the same time being generated by and generating a different world. Alphonso Lingis even talks about the possibility of "drifting into a second space": "What of the possibility of releasing one's hold on the levels, drifting into a sensible apeiron without levels, into that nocturnal, oneiric, erotic, mythogenic second space that shows through the interstices of the daylight world of praktognostic competence?" He too mentions a second not body but space, the affectable space of night, of lucid dreaming and shadow-knowledge. Bruno Latour hints at a similar process of emergence of bodies and worlds, although he does not mention at this time the new Amazonian anthropology: "Acquiring a body is thus a progressive enterprise that produces at once a sensory medium and a sensitive world" (18). A body is an acquired body that produces its world anew on and on.

Massumi too has developed a notion of body which is at the same time abstract and concrete, actual and virtual contradicting thus the third logical principle (the law of the excluded middle). This body is both in itself and outside of itself, it "infolds the outside", it constantly abducts its exteriority. As abstract and potential, the body is "radically open", so that exteriority is interiorized without mediation. Mediation is an inhibitory act, that is why

consciousness is subtractive. Massumi's autonomy of affect complements the Amazonian theory of multiple natures. Without the latter, it would seem that the virtual is exclusively in this world. That's why the virtual body seems to be captured by today's extractive economy, by the affective mechanisms of control. Capitalism modulates the potential, but it dwells in its own one-world annulling the agency of the unknown. A second space and a second body would generate a different outside, by abducting the unknown. Not in an escapist sense, because it would just banalize the world of capitalism as a contingent and not a necessary world.

As long as we are caught in the present available body, there is indeed no outside. The problem is not that there is no outside, but it lies precisely in the fact that we are caught in the same outside without working with it. There are multiple outsides to be produced. Even one devoid of human and without thought.

1. Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter A Political Ecology of Things* - a philosophical and political project against the modern idea of "parsing the world into dull matter (it, things) and vibrant life (us, beings)"
2. Alina Popa, *The Crises of (Com)passion and the Corrupt Audience* - a discussion on the perpetual creation of homes as economic and political mechanisms of control and the expanded notion of homelessness
3. "the Earth has been used to ground thought instead of bending it" Ben Woodard, *On an Ungrounded Earth Towards a new Geophilosophy*
4. Silvia Federici, *The Caliban and the Witch*
5. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Metafísicas caníbales Líneas de antropología postestructural*
6. Tom Sparrow, *Bodies in Transit: The Plastic Subject of Alphonso Lingis*
7. Clarice Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.*
8. Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*
9. Aparecida Vilaça, *Chronically Unstable Bodies*
10. Brian Massumi, *Autonomy of Affect*
11. Giorgio Agamben, *The Open*
12. Guy Debord, *Perspectives for Conscious Changes in Everyday Life*
13. Brian Massumi, *Navigating Movements*
14. Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Concepts of Life and the Living in the Societies of Control*
15. Alphonso Lingis, *Sensation: Intelligibility in Sensibility*
16. H.P. Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*
17. Denise Ferreira da Silva, lecture
18. Bruno Latour, *How to Talk about the Body? The Normative Dimension of Science Studies*